

# Contemplative Practice **STARTS WITH COURAGE**

When we developed the name, mission, and vision for the Annandale Center for Contemplative Practice, we were careful to include the word "contemplation" as a cornerstone. Paul and Cheri define "contemplation" this way: "the direction of the mind's inquiry to varied sources of information and knowledge." We believe contemplative practices develop awareness as a result of intentional pause and reflection. The fruits of awareness, when cultivated with courage, might be said to manifest in the following ways:

## Inward: Self-Discovery Practices

These practices are the ones that we use to learn about ourselves, and to discover the nuances that make us who we are. These introspective exercises might sometimes bring awareness to how we relate to ourselves and others, and also can identify a deeper sense of how thoughts and emotions move through the body as felt sensations. By working with these practices, we might develop a sense of being more "in tune" with ourselves, what we feel, how we feel things, and in which circumstances they are felt.

Practices that foster self-discovery include meditative practices, discovery writing, such as morning pages, exercises in body awareness and attention, and the development of mindfulness. Through these practices, we can begin to see our thoughts, feelings, and the general sense of the quality of being as the natural result of the causes and conditions in our lives.

## Creative: Self-Expressive Practices


Self-Expressive practices are those that manifest what is moving through us at one time or the other through outward expression. Whereas these expressions might be seen, and meant to be seen by others, they do not have to be. However they emerge, self-expressive practices are for the one expressing them, not just for the ones who observe them. Sometimes, the expressions that we make are planned and structured with a specific product or intention in mind, whereas sometimes the expressions are spontaneous, emerging freely and spontaneously. In these cases, the person who is engaging in self-expression can be informed by what emerges just as those who are witnessing the expression can be informed.

Creative, self-expressive practices include contemplative or reflective writing, dance, singing and / or vocalization, songwriting, painting, drawing, sculpture, or another form of artistic expression, and even yoga, martial arts, or active sports.

## Relational: Self-Transitive Practices

These are practices we use to connect with other beings and even with our environments. Much of our communication each day is relational in some way, so what does it mean to bring a contemplative lens to how we relate to the world around us? Often these practices ask us to notice and seek to understand that we are not alone. They ask us to consider how we interact with our planet, our seasons, and our community. They ask us to notice that others we come into contact with, be they family, friends, colleagues, or even strangers, just like us, experience joy and sorrow, and, just like us, are doing the best they can to get their needs met. We cultivate practices that help us to connect beyond ourselves and to do so with kindness and compassion for both ourselves and others in our midst.

Self-transitive practices emerge when we practice self-discovery and self-expressive activities in community with others, as well as when we commune with nature. Self-transitive practices also include non-violent communication, focused meditation practices such as metta and karuna, listening practices (such as circle processing), storytelling, and convergent facilitation.

  
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